

The Ballarat Naturalist

October 2008



Trailing Goodenia
Goodenia lanata
(Club Logo)

INGLEWOOD EXCURSION
FRIDAY 19 SEPT. TO SUNDAY 21, 2008-09-24



Red Mint Bush

Based at the Inglewood Motel/caravan park on the northern fringe of the town, eight members of FNCB enjoyed a delightful weekend in fine weather. Varying habitats in this significant section of the Box Ironbark Forest zone were explored by day, and in the evening, there was much discussion in considering botanical finds during field excursions.

Once again, Collis and Mavis Needs (local naturalists) provided valuable assistance in nominating likely areas to visit in the current seasonal conditions.

Fortunately the early mornings were still, with early sunshine, and sorties, to the accompaniment of Peaceful Dove calls, were made into the conservation reserves adjacent to our base. Wattles of interest in this area are Mallee Wattle, Hop Wattle, Streaked Wattle, Roundleaf Wattle.

Saturday morning was spent in an area of mallee (Bull, Green Blue) some four kilometres NW of Inglewood. Blue Mallee is harvested here for eucalyptus oil production and amongst the regrowth there were many and varied flowering plants including: Flame heath, Scarlet Mint Bush, Spikey Guinea Flower, Golden

Pennants (in bud), Creamy Candles, Common Riceflower, Fairy Waxflower, Blue Stars, Alpine Grevillea. Orchids found here were: Leopard and Snake orchids, Rabbit's Ears (Sun Orchid), Pink Fingers and Blue Caladenia and Waxlips – all in high numbers. Dense groups of Waxlips flowering amid young Blue Mallee re-growth makes truly a beautiful sight!

Stands of taller Green Mallee with the Blue Mallee area provided some excellent



Golden Moth



Caladenia carnea



Waxlip

bird sightings at close quarters – a pair of Crested Bellbirds, White Fronted Honeyeater, Tawny Crowned Honeyeater, White Fronted Chat, Weebill, Western Gerygone, Tree Martin, Australian Raven.

Saturday afternoon was spent in a northern block of Kooyoorra State Park approximately eight kilometres WNW of Inglewood, along Spring Creek Road. This area is open Box Ironbark forest which provided further interesting observations. In addition to plants of the morning session Tiny Greenhood was flowering, and Bulbine Lily, Tall Sundew, Twining Fringe Lily were found.

The bird list here included Red Capped Robin (f), Dusky Woodswallow, Swift Parrot, Musk lorikeet, Brown Headed Honeyeater, Grey Shrike Thrush, Yellow Tufted Honeyeater, Tree Martin.

On returning to Inglewood a stop at the reservoir by the Botanical Gardens revealed only Black Duck, Grey Teal, Wood Duck, Masked Lapwing, Australian Raven and Welcome Swallow.

Sunday morning – The “Gravel patch” on Back road, off the Kingower-Inglewood Road on the southern boundary of the Kooyoorra State Park central block, was our first port of call.



Wood White

Again orchids were plentiful amongst short green growth following recent rain. Additional species found were Bluebeard Caladenia Golden Moths, Shiny Everlasting and Early Nancy. Birds recorded here included Wedge-tailed Eagle (pair), Rufus Whistler (m), White Winged Chough, Striated Pardalote, White Throated Tree Creeper. A Thornbill sp. was nest building in drooping leaves of a eucalypt.

Sunday afternoon. Barry's Rock Road, west of Back Road, provided an exciting afternoon ses-

sion. Giant granite boulders and eucalypts formed a backdrop for a most spectacular landscape of Wallowa Wattles in full flower – brilliant yellow rounded, spreading domes of colour. Beneath was a profuse carpet of orchids and Green Rock Fern. Snake Orchids were predominant with many Bluebeard Caladenias and Pink Fingers. The drought tolerant Green Rock Fern had responded quickly to rain. The dense carpet of orchids spread literally “as far as the eye could see”! Sulphur Crested Cockatoo and Red Capped Robin (m) were added to the bird list here.

This was indeed a spectacular place to conclude a weekend during which only three specific areas were visited. Each provided exciting field work which bears testimony to the need to preserve the remaining Box Ironbark forests for the sustainability of their beautiful and varied flora and fauna. And further, the drive back to Ballarat is through country full of historical and natural interest.

Greg Binns, OAM

Photography—Carol Hall

WATTLES OF BALLARAT – JOHN GREGURKE

John Gregurke spoke to the September general meeting on the work being done to produce a book about the wattles of the Ballarat area. The content for the book was started by the late Pat Murphy and has now been taken up by the club. The text for the book was largely prepared by Pat and many photos had been taken but with changes to digital technology there is opportunity to try for better photo examples. Inclusions in the book have been restricted to examples in the bush within a 40km radius of Ballarat. Included are naturally occurring species and any that have spread and generally naturalised into the bush. Wattles planted in gardens or reserves are not included unless they are naturally reproducing in the bush. Some species that have caused conjecture and which we currently propose to omit include *Acacia pravissima* (Ovens Wattle), *Acacia elata* (Cedar Wattle) and *Acacia suaveolens* (Sweet Wattle). One specimen of this last species was reported at Enfield but currently cannot be found.

Currently the proposed structure for the book is a forward providing background to the development of the book, some general information about wattles including aboriginal and European uses, then photographs showing each plant's general form, a close-up with flowers and phyllodes and a description which includes some information on distribution around Ballarat.

World wide there are about 1200 *Acacia* species with about 900 in Australia. A few years ago there was a proposal to rename acacias in Australia to *racosperma*. Fortunately the decision was against this so ‘our’ plants remain acacias.

All acacias start life with bipinnate foliage, have glands that secrete nectar and

protein rich seed in pods. They are legumes having a symbiotic relationship with bacteria and nodules on their roots which fix nitrogen, improving soils. There is a case for letting acacias grow in commercial plantation forests to improve nitrogen levels in soils. Acacias can have grubs in their wood which cockatoos can locate. The general term wattles was applied because in Europe there was a building construction technique called wattle and daub, and in Australia the tree usually used for this construction was the acacia.

Acacias have a number of economical uses including timber for furniture (example blackwood and silver wattle), as ornamental garden plants, for extraction of tannins for tanning leather with black wattle being an example used, and also in the 'bush tucker' industry where seeds may be eaten green or dry roasted and used in baked goods.

Acacias are readily recognised by Australians with the wattle being Australia's national flower and the 1st September being Wattle Day. The usually yellow flowers make wattles highly recognisable, but there is an exception. *Acacia leprosa* (Cinnamon Wattle) was discovered in forest near Melbourne in 1995. The flowers of this plant are red and Bill Murphy has a specimen in his garden. It is a plant closely related to *Acacia verniciflua* (Varnish wattle) and has to be vegetatively propagated.

Wattles can also be weeds, readily spreading from gardens. Acacias which can become weeds include *Acacia baileyana* (Cootamundra Wattle), *Acacia decurrens* (Early Black Wattle), *Acacia longifolia* (Sallow Wattle), *Acacia pravissima* (Ovens Wattle) and *Acacia elata* (Cedar Wattle).

John has developed a key for the identification of local wattles to be included in the book. He brought along a number of specimens, some of which he had collected and kept in his refrigerator. It was interesting to see how well they had kept. After the explanation of terms used in the key it was also interesting to use it to identify the species which were all common and local. This practical part of the evening was a valuable addition and helped consolidate the knowledge gained. Some modifications will be needed as a result of our plant inspection and key trial.

John was thanked both for his work on the book and for his very informative, interesting and well presented talk.

Peter Dalman

Mt Cole Outing 6th September '08

Leader Fran Hanrahan

Nine members left Ballarat - we collected two more (Dennis and Elizabeth) in Beaufort, and headed for Mt Cole. It was a delightful day in early Spring - a bit cloudy later, but it remained fine for our time there.

Where did we go?

From Beaufort we drove to the Richards Camping Ground and then walked the 1 km up to the Falls Lookout before returning. As the camping ground was a bit crowded, we opted to have our lunch stop at The Glut Picnic Reserve. After lunch we had a look at the recently burnt area of forest nearby. Our last area was along Singing Gully Road near the dam that is Beaufort's main water supply. We inspected several places in this area before returning to Ballarat.

So, what did we see?

Plants.

Being early Spring, the main flowering time was yet to arrive - but a few early flowers were there - that is, - apart from the wattles - they were to be seen in profusion in all the places we visited.

The wattles in flower were Early Black Wattle (*A. mearnsii*), Silver Wattle (*a. dealbata*), Blackwood Wattle (*a. melanoxylon*), Prickly Moses Wattle (*a. verticillata*), Spreading Wattle (*a. genistifolia*), Golden Wattle (*a. pycnantha*) and Gold Dust Wattle (*a. acinacea*).

Other flowers we saw were; one Tiny Violet (*v. cleistogamoides*) but plenty of Scented Sundews (*drosera whittakeri*), Hovea (*h. heterophylla*), Purple Coral Pea (*h. violacea*), Common Heath (*epacris impressa*) - both the pink and white forms. Others that were just starting to flower were; Gorse Bitter Pea (*daviesia ulicifolia*), Spiney Matt Rush and Tall and Sickle Greenhood Orchids.

Some unusual plants included, a fungus that was brown, rubbery to touch and known by the name of 'Jews Ears'. This was seen on a burnt-out site we visited. At our last stop the rare local Holly Grevillia (*g. flora pendula*) was at last located. Its GPS co ordinates were recorded, and, although it was not yet in flower, it will now be easier to locate when it does!

Birds

We didn't see many - indeed we saw more variety during the journey to get there, than we did once we had arrived. Sulphur Crested Cockatoos were to be seen everywhere. Some 13 species were recorded, the most satisfying being a pair of Flame Robins (the male in full breeding plumage) that appeared while we were having our lunch!

Geology

Unlike plants and birds, the geology of a place is always there; it doesn't change with the weather, season or day!

Mt. Hope is a granite outcrop - exposed over time by erosion. The granite is of similar age to Mt Beckworth and that around the Gong Reservoir - except that it is much larger, higher and more extensive in size.

The country that the granite has intruded into is typical of the 'gold country' found in Central Victoria, slates, shales and quartz of the Ordovician Era. This was very much in evidence at our last stop - along Singing Gully Road. There was evidence that this area was once heavily mined, with abandoned shafts, and bare rocky ground everywhere - a real challenge for the hardy plants we found growing

there; which included a Cherry Ballart that was growing out of an abandoned mine shaft!

Our thanks to Fran for a well planned, well conducted and very rewarding outing!

John Morrish

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Incorporated
No. A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135

Minutes of the General Meeting

5th September 2008.

Opening and Apologies.

The President, Peter Dalman, opened the meeting and welcomed 20 members and visitors.

Apologies were received from Anna And Chris Baulch, Ken Hammond, Genni Binns, Denis and Elisabeth Thurgood, Zelda Martin.

Minutes of previous meeting were summarised in the Ballarat Naturalist and tabled.

Correspondence.

IN:

- Geelong Naturalist, /Bendigo FNC: Whirrakee, ./Castlemaine Naturalist
- FNCV: Field Nats News, September 2008; Victorian Naturalist, August 2008.
- Angair: Wildflower and Art Show, 20 & 21 September 2008.
- Environment Victoria: Annual General Meeting, 24 September 2008.
- South East Australian Naturalists Association: Minutes, Financial Statement, Agenda for General Meeting, Statutory Requirements in respect to Incorporation, ABN and GST
- Bendigo Bank: Statement.
- DSE: 2008-2011 Midlands Draft Bendigo Fire Operations Plan.
- Victorian National Parks Association: Appeal; Red Gum campaign./Bush Heritage Fund: Appeal.
- Australian Natural History medallion: dates for general meeting being arranged.
- Threatened Species Network: TSN News, Spring 2008.
- Friends of Kooyoorra: Wildflower show at Rheola Hall, 20 & 21 September, 2008

OUT:

- RHSV: Membership.
- Premier Brumby: Support for VEAC recommendations for River Red Gum protection.
- Bob Curtain: Thanks for donation of spotting telescope.
- Various: Invitations to Stella Bedgood Memorial Lecture.

Reports

Treasurer's Report: Opening balance \$4564.51, Income \$18.90, Expenses \$72.25, Closing balance: \$4511.16. *Received on the motion of Les Hanrahan, seconded John Morrish.*

General Business

- That the committee investigate the feasibility of acquiring a suitable tripod for use with the telescope donated by Bob Curtain.
- That complimentary copies of *The Ballarat Naturalist* be sent to Bob Curtain.
- That SEANA Autumn Camp, 2010, hosted by Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat is held on Friday 19 – Monday 22 March. .

- That the newsletter editor email a copy of each issue of *The Ballarat Naturalist* to the SEANA web site coordinator with permission to use articles on the SEANA web site with appropriate acknowledgement of the club and author.
- Val Hocking was thanked for editing the past two editions of *The Ballarat Naturalist*.
- Members were asked to suggest topics, guest speakers and excursions to be included in next years program.
- Club logo: Members thanked David Hocking for the work he has done to modify the club cloth badge to a digital form for use in club publications and letterheads. Suggestions for further modification were made.
- October Guest Speaker: Tina Bell “Use and History of School of Forestry Herbarium”.
- Meeting place for Saturday’s excursion will be Ballarat Horticulture Centre because the shopping centre at Ballarat Market Place has closed. A permanent meeting place will need to be decided.

Show and Tell

Claire Dalman showed a specimen of leaves and fruit from Native Apricot *Pittosporum angustifolium* collected in the Flinders Ranges.

Field Reports

- Margaret Thomas: Masked Lapwing and chick on road verge, Sturt St near Ballarat and Clarendon College on 5 September. 6 Wood Duck on puddle in new Jasper Hill development. Kookaburras, Crimson Rosellas and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo in Nerrina Garden.
- Ken Mc Donnell: Whiskered Terns At Mt Rowan and Creswick.
- John Mildren: Pair of Brolga flying over Lake Wendouree in late August.
- Greg Binns: North Gardens Reserve – Hobby, Darter, Australasian Grebe, White-eyed Duck, Great Egret and Little Grassbird. Lake Wendouree – Red-kneed Dotterel and Black-winged Stilt.
- Lynsday Fink: Pair of New Holland Honeyeater nesting at Redan.
- Peter Billing: Sufficient water in Lake Wendouree to give pleasant reflections.
- John Gregurke: Masked Lapwing with 2 chicks on the median strip, Creswick Road, 20 August. Copperhead snake at Haddon Water Reserve, late August. 120 Black Swan nesting at Lake Burrumbeet.
- Claire Dalman: 60+ Pied Oyster Catcher settled in grassy paddock in evening on Kangaroo island.

Excursion Arrangements:

Saturday 6 September: leaving Ballarat Horticulture Centre at 9.30 am for Mt Cole. Leader Fran Hanrahan.

Wednesday 10 September, Enfield, wattle photography.

Syllabus Item: John Gregurke, club member, spoke on “Wattles of Ballarat” based on the work begun by the late Pat Murphy and taken up as a club project to complete and publish a book. Peter Dalman thanked John and presented him with a gift.

Supper

CALENDAR 2008

October

- Fri 3 Tina Bell—*History and use of Herbarium at Creswick Forestry School*
- Sun 5 Excursion—Mt Beckworth—Club Members
- Tues 7 **Mid-Week Excursion**—Wattle Photography
- 17-19 SEANA Spring Camp, Healesville hosted by Ringwood FNC
- Tues 28 Committee meeting at Carol Hall's

November

- Fri 7 **Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture**
Neville Walsh, Victorian Government Botanist.
Threatened Plants in Victoria—where we are and how we have progressed in looking after them.
- Sat 8 Excursion—*Bamganie*—the Cameron property—Greg Binns
Cameron Property—Greg Binns

NOTE—Excursion Departure place is now the Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cnr. Gregory and Gillies Sts. (Our Friday meeting place)

Committee

President Mr Peter Dalman
Vice-President Mr Greg Binns
Secretary Mr John Gregurke
Treasurer..... Mr Les Hanrahan

Miss Helen Burgess.....	Mrs Claire Dalman
Mrs Carol Hall	Mrs Val Hocking.....
Mr John Morrish	Dr Frances Hanrahan.....
Ms Nina Netherway (editor).....	

Correspondence: PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350

Email:

Website: www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au Click on *Local Info. Search Environment*

Meetings are held at Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Depart from Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) at 9.30am unless otherwise specified.

A monthly publication of the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc.
Incorporation # A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135